



**U.S. Department of Justice**

**Brett L. Tolman**

**United States Attorney  
District of Utah**

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**CONTACT:**

**MELODIE RYDALCH  
U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Utah  
801-325-3206  
801-243-6475 (cell)**

**PATRICK KIERNAN  
FBI -UTAH  
801-579-4673**

**CARA SMITH  
Illinois Attorney General's Office  
312-814-3118 (office)  
312-636-4835 (cell)**

**LT. DAVE HOFFMAN  
Naperville Police Department  
630-305-3399**

**PRESS RELEASE**

***COORDINATED EFFORTS IN UTAH, ILLINOIS  
LEAD TO ARREST OF REGISTERED SEX  
OFFENDER IN UTAH***

***FEDERAL CHARGES FILED ALLEGING  
PRODUCTION OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY***

SALT LAKE CITY -- A complaint unsealed Friday morning in federal court in Salt Lake City charges a registered sex offender in Salt Lake City with enticing and coercing a minor child in Illinois to engage in sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing visual depictions of the conduct. The defendant allegedly told the child he needed the pictures

for “modeling” and on another occasion offered the child a modeling contract.

U.S. Attorney Brett L. Tolman, FBI Special Agent in Charge Timothy J. Fuhrman of the Salt Lake Field Office and Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff today announced the arrest of Gerald Wheeler of Salt Lake City, age 40.

In Utah, the FBI and Utah Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force participated in the investigation. Investigative agencies in Illinois included the Naperville Police Department, the Illinois Attorney General’s Office, the Illinois Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, and the FBI.

“This coordinated effort has taken another sexual predator off the street and off line,” Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan said. “The investigation of individuals who pose risks to the children of Illinois does not stop at the state line. My office will continue its pursuit of sexual predators with law enforcement agencies across the nation.”

Wheeler was arrested Wednesday afternoon in Salt Lake City. He had an initial appearance in federal court Friday morning. He will remain in custody. Wheeler, who has a previous conviction for attempted forcible sexual abuse of a minor child, faces a mandatory-minimum sentence of 25 years in federal prison if he is convicted of the charge in the complaint. The sentence could go as high as 50 years. Defendants charged in complaints are presumed innocent unless or until proven guilty in court.

“Unfortunately, this case is a graphic example of the kinds of computer-facilitated sexual exploitation crimes against children we are seeing in Utah and across the nation. Investigating and prosecuting Internet predators who target children is a priority for all of us. We will use the significant federal tools we have to aggressively prosecute these cases and see that convicted offenders get the maximum amount of jail time possible,” Tolman said.

“This case is also an excellent example of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies and prosecutors working together in a smart, coordinated way to combat this growing crime. These partnerships give us the tools we need to protect children from online crimes,” Tolman said.

According to Fuhrman, “This investigation represents a situation where an individual, who had been previously convicted, continued to engage in conduct that came to the attention of law enforcement. In this particular situation, cooperative efforts have taken this individual off the streets and he will now face the consequences of his repeated unlawful behavior.”

According to the federal complaint, in July 2006 an individual identified in the complaint as Parent A contacted law enforcement authorities in Naperville, Illinois. Parent A said that his 13-year-old daughter, “Child H,” had been receiving obscene, lewd, and sexual messages on her “My Space” computer site and her Tagged.com account from individuals known as “Mike” and “Brian.” The messages included requests for the child to engage in various sexual acts. In addition, Child H was asked to fly to New York to engage in sexual conduct in exchange for a modeling contract.

Continuing the investigation with the help of Parent A, law enforcement officers discovered several photographs of Child H in sexual poses.

Parent A also told law enforcement officers that “Mike” had contacted Child H from a cell phone. The Naperville Police Department was able to determine the phone subscriber’s name in Salt Lake City.

Using My Space records, detectives were able to trace an IP address to an Internet café and gaming facility in Salt Lake City. According to the complaint, the owner of the café compared the log-in times to possible users at the café at 3:16 a.m. on Aug. 15, 2006. Because the café is not a 24-hour facility, the owner confirmed the only individual with access to the IP address at 3:15 a.m. would be the facility manager, Jerry. The owner also confirmed that he knew that the cell number “Brian” had used to call Child H belonged to a former employee of the facility, who was close to Jerry.

Jerry was identified as Gerald Wheeler. The owner of the café confirmed that a computer recovered from the basement of the internet café was used primarily by Wheeler prior to August 2006.

“Wheeler is a prime example of why parents need to educate themselves on the internet and pay close attention to their children’s activity while online. This was critical in apprehending this predator. Local, state and federal authorities will take every step necessary to pursue these offenders and bring them to justice. The Naperville Police Department greatly appreciates the cooperation and effort of the Illinois Attorney General’s ICAC Task Force, the Utah Attorney General’s ICAC Task Force, and the Chicago and Salt Lake City FBI Offices in working together to protect our children,” Sgt. Bill Davis of the Naperville Police Department Investigations Division, General Assignment Supervisor, said today.

Ken Wallentine, Chief of Law Enforcement in the Utah Attorney General’s Office, said, “This case illustrates the critical need for increased vigilance in child protection efforts and affirms our commitment to a unified state and federal law enforcement effort. The defendant, a registered sex offender, posed a particularly severe threat to the victim and other children. The Utah Attorney General appreciates the tremendous efforts of our partners in the FBI in Utah and in Illinois, as well as United States Attorney Brett Tolman in their unfailing commitment to eradicating child predation in cyberspace.”

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